



Questions and Answers: Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies Committee Third Draft

Version: November 15, 2021

What are Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards?

Minnesota's K-12 Academic Standards are the statewide expectations for student learning in K-12 public schools. School districts and charter schools are required to teach these standards to ensure that all Minnesota students have access to high-quality content and instruction.

What is an Academic Standard?

An academic standard is a summary description of student learning in a content area. Each standard contains one or more benchmarks.

What is a Benchmark?

A benchmark supplements a standard and is the specific knowledge and/or skill that a student must master to meet part of an academic standard by the end of a grade level or grade band.

Why are the academic standards in social studies being revised now?

Minnesota's academic standards are reviewed and revised on a 10-year cycle. One content area of academic standards is reviewed and revised each year based on a schedule approved by the Minnesota legislature. Social studies is the content area that is currently up for review and revision.

How are Minnesota's standards reviewed and revised?

In order to develop Minnesota's rigorous academic standards, Minnesotans with content knowledge from varying perspectives and backgrounds draft the academic standards for Minnesota public schools. The process of reviewing and revising academic standards begins with the formation of a standards committee. Any Minnesotan may apply to serve on a standards review committee. For the social studies standards, an application period was open from March 2 to June 30, 2020 for Minnesotans to apply to participate in the social studies standards committee. In July 2020, the committee was selected.

Who makes up the social studies standards committee?

The Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies committee has 36 members, and includes K-12 teachers, administrators, college faculty, informal educators, and community members. Minnesota Statutes outline who must be represented on the committee, including parents, currently licensed and in the classroom teachers, licensed school administrators, school board members, post-secondary institution faculty teaching core subjects, and business community members.

What review and revision work was done for the first draft of the social studies standards?

An initial draft of the social standards was developed. This early draft of the social studies standards was posted on December 1, 2020. This draft provided a revision of the standards, not the benchmarks, and did not provide a comprehensive view of the final product. The work was centered on the standards themselves and did not include detailed supplemental benchmarks. A public comment period on the draft was open from December 1, 2020, to January 4, 2021. Public comment received informed the development of the next draft.

What review and revision work was done for the second draft?

In the preparing the second draft of the social studies standards, the work focused on the detailed supplemental benchmarks within each standard. The feedback and public comments received on the first draft helped to inform revisions for the second draft of social studies standards. The benchmarks included in the second draft provide detailed descriptions about the knowledge and/or skill that students must master to meet part of an academic standard.

[ADDED 11/15/21]: What review and revision work was done for the third draft?

In preparing for the third draft of the social studies standards, the committee reviewed the feedback and public comments submitted. The feedback and public comments informed revisions of the standards providing to provide more clarity and the revisions of the benchmarks to reduce the number at each grade level to a manageable amount and the content to reflect developmental reasonableness.

[ADDED 11/15/21]: What has changed between the second draft and the third draft?

The most significant changes between the second and third draft was clarity of language and manageability of grade level content. Standard 22 from draft 3 was revised into two new standards; one in the history strand and one in the ethnic studies strand to provide more alignment within the strand and with other standards.

The committee also focused on the feedback that the number of benchmarks in elementary school and middle school was not manageable in draft two. Goals were set for 15-20 benchmarks per year in grades K-2, 20-25 benchmarks per year in grades 3-5, and 25-35 benchmarks per year in grades 6-8.

Finally, the committee ensured clarity of language in each of the benchmarks so educators, students and parents can see the learning objective in each grade level and ensured that there was an alignment with the [C3 Framework's](#) vision of inquiry learning.

What changed between the first draft and the second draft?

The most significant change between the **first draft** and the **second draft** was that benchmarks were added for each standard. The first draft only included examples of benchmarks, and the second draft included complete drafts of benchmarks.

The second draft also integrated technology and information literacy consistent with the ITEM (Information Technology Educators of Minnesota) 2019 standards, which are required by Minnesota Statutes.

In the second draft, the committee focused on ensuring consistency in skills and knowledge across subject areas, specifically with the English language arts (ELA) standards. When the ELA standards were revised in 2020, the Literacy in History (2010) was removed and replaced with information and technical text; therefore, a workgroup of the committee reviewed the 2020 ELA Standards to ensure consistency and make connections with that document to create cohesion in learning for students.

Ensuring that the standards reflect Minnesota's student population continues to be an important lens throughout the standards review process. This includes the interdisciplinary study of the social, political, economic and historical perspectives of the diverse racial and ethnic groups in America. In the second draft, some benchmarks have been moved into a new strand called Ethnic Studies, which emphasizes understanding of multiple perspectives. This addresses a theme from the first round of public comment, which was the desire to highlight our individual and shared experiences in learning.

Finally, the alignment of content within a grade or grade level was ensured through themes at each grade level.

[UPDATED 11/15/21]: How do parents, families and members of the public provide feedback?

All Minnesotans are encouraged to provide feedback on each draft of the standards and benchmarks during the public review and comment period. The review and comment period for the committee's third draft is open November 15 – December 14, 2021. A [public comment survey](#) is available for providing feedback. Minnesotans who are not able to use the survey can send public comment via email to mde.academic-standards@state.mn.us or by postal mail (postmarked by December 14) to:

Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113

The third draft of the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies represents the work of the standards review committee since the public comment period and targeted feedback sessions were held in summer 2021. In the third draft, the committee worked to embed the feedback from Minnesotans, as these standards are developed by Minnesotans for Minnesotans.

Additionally, MDE has initiated the rulemaking phase of the standards review and revision process. The rulemaking phase includes a request for public comment via the Office of Administrative Hearing website. Note that the OAH public comment is focused solely on the **standards**, not the benchmarks. Interested persons or

groups may submit comments or information on these possible standards in writing until 4:30 p.m. on January 14, 2022. See the [rulemaking page](#) for additional information.

How are social studies standards organized?

The academic standards and their supporting benchmarks are organized into five strands: Citizenship and Government, Economics, Geography, U.S and World History, and Ethnic Studies. The contributions of Minnesota's American Indian tribes and communities integrated into each strand and all standards. Each of the strands have between three and six standards.

The standards contain one or more benchmarks at each grade-level. A benchmark is a supplement to the standard and is the specific knowledge and/or skill that a student must accomplish to meet part of an academic standard by the end of each K-8 grade level. The social studies standards and benchmarks for the high school are grade-bands that are developed to provide structure for the content students must meet in the three and a half credits required for graduation. At the high school level specifically, the standards do not correlate to specific course names. The standards are the knowledge and/or skills that students must master to meet graduation requirements, and can be taught through locally determined courses.

What is curriculum and how does it relate to the academic standards?

Academic standards are not curriculum. Curriculum are the resources, assessments, learning experiences, and plans that educators utilize at the local level to instruct students on the content of the academic standards. By statute (Minn. Stat. § 120B.021, subd. 2(b)), Minnesota academic standards do not require a specific curriculum. Districts, schools, and educators make curriculum and instruction decisions to support the teaching and student mastery of standards. As a result, local school districts, schools and educators choose what curriculum is used and what classes are taught in their schools to ensure that students meet the academic standards. Ultimately, local educators make the decisions about “how” to deliver instruction to meet the rigorous learning expectation of the academic standards.

Is Critical Race Theory part of the standards?

Critical Race Theory is **not** included in any current or proposed Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards. Critical Race Theory is a theory that was developed in the 1970s by legal scholars. It may be taught in some master's or doctoral-level programs.

Families that have questions about what is being taught in classrooms should reach out to their teachers and school leaders.